

The men and women of our Armed Forces are deployed throughout the world today. They are in harm's way now in Iraq and Afghanistan, both wars about which the American people are divided. However, our nation must avoid the mistake of a generation ago of confusing politics with military service. Our men and women of the military choose to serve their country and uphold the Constitution. They make the ultimate sacrifice in defense of the values that make America great. Whatever question Americans may have about the wisdom of a war, we should always honor the service member and their families because they represent what makes our country strong.

If we are serious about cutting the deficit we will have to make tough decisions about the budget, and that will include making responsible cuts to defense spending. However, the Defense budget must have the needed tools and resources to keep our nation safe and provides the necessary supplies and equipment to our service members to carry out their mission. We must also provide service members and their families with the support and benefits they are entitled. I will continue to take a fiscally responsible approach to our national defense and support for our military and their families.

However, our commitment to the Armed Services does not end with active duty. Over 23 million men and women living today have answered our nation's call to defend the liberties, ideals, and values we Americans hold dear. I have always had the greatest respect for the men and women who have placed themselves in harm's way to preserve our nation and our way of life. However, too many veterans remain uncompensated for their service. I will continue to work to ensure that our veterans receive the honor and care they deserve for their bravery and sacrifice.

Afghanistan

I believe that our duty to the Constitution, our duty to our country, our duty to our men and women in uniform, is to look with clear eyes at the facts, and to exercise independent judgment. For the first six years of the previous administration Congress failed at that duty by limiting debate on the war and offering only uncritical support of the President's policies in Iraq. Not only was that an abrogation of our congressional responsibility to conduct oversight, but it was also unfair to our troops and their families.

Civilian leaders must not deploy our blood and treasure in overseas operations without a

strategy with defined objectives for victory. We cannot put our Armed Forces in a protracted, open-ended war effort with no clear strategy without suffering grave consequences to our national security and the health of our military. President Obama took a very deliberative approach in his review of the strategy in Afghanistan, and I believe that he and our military deserve the opportunity to implement this strategy. However, I am concerned about our current strategy and its effectiveness on countering the cross border insurgency supported by elements in Pakistan. I will continue to work with my colleagues in Congress and with the Obama Administration to try to achieve a successful outcome in Afghanistan, while always assessing the progress and effectiveness of our strategy. Our men and women in uniform and the country's security deserve nothing less.